

MINUTES  
MONDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2007  
BOARD OF SELECTMEN  
AUDITORIUM  
TOWN HALL  
7:00PM

I. CALL TO ORDER

A regular meeting of the Board was called to order in open session at 7:08 PM in the Auditorium at Town Hall. All members were present. Town Administrator Tom Younger and Assistant Town Administrator Jeff Conti were also present.

II. QUESTIONS FROM TOWN RESIDENTS

There were no questions.

III. ACTION BY APPOINTMENT

Review of the Human Rights Commission's Motion to Sever its Ties to the ADL  
Sponsored No Place for Hate Program

Chairman Firenze reviewed the process for the Board's deliberations. He allowed three citizens to speak who did not have a chance to speak at the Human Rights Commission (HRC)'s Sep. 6 meeting.

Sid Werlin said he is for recognizing the Armenian genocide as a Holocaust, but feels that the current effort is counterproductive to that goal.

Steve Colbert said he is disappointed in the HRC. The Anti-Defamation League (ADL)'s position is the same now as it was when Belmont adopted No Place for Hate. He feels we are setting an impossible standard for the HRC, and while he feels the ADL's position is wrong, he does not feel that this is the best action to take.

Gregory Arabian said the Belmont Town Club has submitted signatures asking the Selectmen to accept the HRC's recommendation. He said that discrimination needs to be stopped before it can grow.

Chairman Firenze read a statement from the ADL requesting that the Town not take action before the ADL National Committee can meet in November. He also indicated that the Massachusetts Municipal Association is recommending a wait and see approach.

HRC Chair Laurie Graham said that the Commission has unanimously recommended the Selectmen sever Belmont's ties to the No Place for Hate program until the ADL recognizes the genocide and supports the pending federal legislation. The HRC has also sent a letter to the ADL explaining its position. There is a strong sentiment in Town in favor of continuing the work of the No Place for Hate campaign independently.

HRC member Trish Lomar said there has been some concern about getting involved in a national issue. The HRC took this action not to get involved in a national issue but because they thought it represented the will of the majority of the citizens of Belmont.

Selectman Solomon said he supports the HRC's motion. He unequivocally believes that what happened to the Armenians was genocide. He also believes the No Place for Hate program has been good for Belmont. But he is convinced that Belmont must send the strongest possible

message to the ADL. For the ADL to oppose a resolution on genocide is hypocrisy. He disagrees that this is a national issue on which the Town should not be involved. If the historical validity of the genocide is not established now before the witnesses pass away, the deniers will win. Belmont can send the message by withdrawing from the only tie the Town has with the ADL.

Selectman Leclerc said this issue has moral, constituent, and jurisdictional aspects. Morally, he believes that what happened to the Armenians was genocide. He also acknowledges the pain suffered by the Armenian community in Belmont and was moved by the presentations made by the community at the HRC hearing. He believes it is not the jurisdiction of the Board to comment on national policy. He supports the first clause of the HRC resolution to withdraw from the program, but not the second clause setting conditions for national policy.

Selectman Firenze said there is no doubt in his mind about the existence of the Armenian genocide. He supports unconditionally the first part of the motion to withdraw from the program, but questions the conditions placed on returning to the program. What happens when the Native Americans seek similar recognition? Or the people of Darfur? It is not the Town's job to tell the ADL what their position should be on legislation, but it is Belmont's prerogative to withdraw from the program.

Selectman Solomon said grassroots political pressure has to begin at the local level and that is why he does not accept the jurisdictional argument. Selectman Leclerc said he spoke to 20 residents about his position and 19 agreed that they did not elect him to express opinions that Congressmen and Senators are elected to do. Selectman Firenze said he also spoke to a number of residents from various community groups and agrees with Selectmen Leclerc to support the first clause of the HRC resolution to withdraw from the program, but not the second clause, "until the ADL recognizes the genocide and supports the pending federal legislation", since it is not the Town's role to dictate what ADL's policy should be.

The Board moved: To accept the recommendation of the Human Rights Commission to withdraw from the Anti-Defamation League-sponsored No Place For Hate program.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

The Board moved: To accept the recommendation of the Human Rights Commission regarding conditions for rejoining the program.

Motion fails 2-1 (Solomon aye, Firenze & Leclerc nay).

The Board recessed for fifteen minutes.

#### Planning Board - Comprehensive/Master Plan Discussion

Chair Jennifer Fallon and members of the Planning Board Sami Baghdady, Andy Rojas, Carla Moynihan, and Planning Coordinator Jeffrey Wheeler appeared before the Board.

Ms. Fallon said the Planning Board is here to make the case for a Master Plan for Belmont which would put zoning maps and policies together in a plan that will express the Town's vision for where Belmont wants to be going. The Town has not had a Master Plan since the 1960s. It would be helpful in dealing with state agencies on state funding opportunities by representing the will of the community. There is a cost which could be spread over two years in future budgets. The first step if the Board approves would be for the Planning Board to discuss what the scope of the plan should be.

Mr. Rojas said one of the benefits of a comprehensive master plan would be to join together a number of projects and studies going on into a skeleton for the overall physical and economic

development of the Town. Ms. Moynihan said the Planning Board would not stop other planning but would continue existing efforts on parallel tracks while working on the Master Plan.

Mr. Wheeler pointed out that the majority of the town was built in the 1920s and 1930s and the Town has changed drastically since then. For example, families that once upon a time might have had one car may have multiple cars now. Families nowadays expect to have more than one bathroom in their home. The Town has to account for these changes in its policies. Chairman Firenze pointed out that many of the zoning laws were not written with redevelopment in mind but rather with new construction in mind, yet now redevelopment is the focus of what most developers and land owners in Belmont are looking to do.

Selectman Leclerc said he feels no need to help out-of-town condo developers make profits. He is concerned with the intent of Belmont's residents and their quality of life, but understands that there are market forces at work which cannot be ignored.

Ms. Fallon said the Planning Board's goal would be to get broad participation, broad consensus, and broad publicity about this effort.

Selectman Solomon raised the question of how to reconcile the goals of a particular neighborhood in Town with the goals of the Town as a whole.

The Planning Board would investigate whether state money could be available to develop the master plan.

Ms. Fallon clarified that the Planning Board is asking the Selectmen to approve the concept of the Master Plan so that more work can be done on the scope of questions that the project will answer, and eventually an RFP can be issued for the professional services that will be needed to develop the plan, and for the Selectmen to think about whether it might fit into the Town's FY09 operating budget. The Planning Board could be ready to go to April Town Meeting to ask for funds if necessary.

The Board moved: To approve the concept of developing a Master Plan and to encourage the Planning Board to continue its work with the goal of making a presentation and recommendation to the April Town Meeting for its approval.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

#### Town Administrator's Report

Mr. Younger reported on the following items:

- " Sidewalk and curbing work continues on Pleasant Street.
- " A large number of copies of the Harvard Lawn Fire Station RFP have been sent out and the due date for responses is October 15.
- " The retail beer and wine license granted by the Board has been approved by the state, but the Town is still awaiting state action on the all-alcohol retail license.
- " The Traffic Advisory Committee on Sep. 6 reaffirmed their earlier vote to recommend not to restripe Trapelo Road. They will be invited to come before the Board to discuss this.
- " Moore Street water main and street reconstruction has begun and will take about 3 weeks.

#### IV. ACTION BY CONSENT

- ? Committee Appointment - Community Preservation Act Committee

There was general discussion. The Selectmen will suggest additional names for discussion next week.

? Award of FY2008 Water Main Replacement Project

The Board moved: To approve the award.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

#### VI. OTHER

Chairman Firenze said there will be a Light Board meeting next Monday at 7:00 PM with a presentation on conservation, energy savings and alternative energy.

The Board discussed the Belmont Center bridge cleaning project which is moving ahead under the guidance of an ad hoc group of citizens. A portion of the bridge has already been cleaned. The project needs a lead sponsor - a number of groups have expressed support but none have stepped up to take the lead. The Light Dept. will change the lights under the bridge. The Garden Club and some local landscapers have offered to work on the appearance of the area. Chairman Firenze asked the Board to endorse this project - it will not cost the Town any out-of-pocket money. This will allow donations to be made through the Town for the Treasurer to administer without naming a formal committee to replace the group that is already doing the work. He noted the bridge was built 100 years ago.

The other Selectmen thanked Chairman Firenze for taking the lead on this issue.

The Board moved: To fully endorse the Belmont Center Bridge cleaning project.

Motion carried unanimously (3-0).

The Board adjourned at 9:19 PM.

---

Thomas G. Younger, Town Administrator